far east Reporter

25¢

# "SEEING IS BELIEVING"

BY

AN AMERICAN POW IN CHINA

# "SEEING IS BELIEVING"

By

An American POW in China

## INTRODUCTION

The American friend in China who sent this unsolicited article to FAR EAST REPORTER writes, "Joe (a pseudonym) lives as enthusiastically as he writes. He and another POW are taking sociology and politics at college. They both want to give what they can to China. I suppose I and dozens of others are the same - to live in such a mood takes personal selfish ambition out of one. Since writing this, Joe's wife was suddenly taken seriouly ill at home. She was heard to fall, and immediately the neighbors rushed in, a doctor was called, and she was taken by ambulance to a hospital in a few minutes. They telegraphed Joe at college, and the authorities there held up the telegram till they had his ticket and all arrangements made. The last report was that she was doing well, but still critically ill; Joe has accommodation at the hospital so that he can be with her at all times, and will probably stay a month".

A pseudonym is used to avoid any pressure on the family of this POW in the United States. Headlines are editorially added.

## AN AMERICAN POW IN CHINA

### THE POW WORKER BECOMES A STUDENT: REVISTS HIS FACTORY

For ten years I lived with the Chinese people in Tsinan, working at a paper factory and getting to know more about them. But I wanted to know much more, and finally I asked the Chinese People's Red Cross Society - my "family" in China - if it was possible for me to go to school. A few days later they replied, they would send me to the People's University in Peking. My factory pay would still go on, as well as the extra ¥100 allowance the Red Cross gives me, and no change in the free medical care for my wife and me. I have taken a three year's course at the college, and have completed two of them; in 1966 I will graduate.

In my two years in Peking I noticed many changes in the city and the country around it. Newspapers told of advances in industry, and often mentioned Tsinan. Visitors from Tsinan told me of great changes there. But seeing is believing, and

I decided when I went to Tsinan for part of the summer vacation, to more than scratch the surface by working in the factory again, and getting the feel from my fellow workers.

I had left Tsinan soon after the hard days (the three years of natural calamities...ed) when rations were short and work cut down because of it. On my return the first thing that struck me was the well-fed, happy look of all the people, old and young. The huge spiritual upsurge could be felt as well as seen; it was contagious too, and I felt their confidence in the good future ahead of them as they worked to bring it about. Working, building - whatever they did was full of enthusiasm and self-reliance; no pushing from above.

There was a big change from the past, and it wasn't fake or put on. I speak Chinese as easily as English and these were my old friends who couldn't put this over on me. I pondered what had happened inside them - this must be the source of everything.

I talked to the cadres and the two presidents (one was a woman) of the factory where I had worked - talked about the question I was trying to answer. They told me to visit the whole factory freely, talk to whom I liked, and work where I wanted to. For nine days I worked in different departments alongside the others; the last seven days I just looked around and talked to the workers.

PAPER MAKING: USE OF WASTE MATERIAL

On the second day I found in one department that they were making toilet paper; they did not have the machinery for this is the past. I found the workers had made the machinery themselves, using material at hand - some old spare parts, and some out of the scrap dump. And here they were packing the paper for export, which must be of the highest quality! I found later that it was above international standard, and had passed the British standard in quality. How had this come about?

I looked around for the highest grade wood pulp, etc. that they must be using. Boy! Did I get the surprise of my life! No wood pulp, or imported material, but discarded, worn-out cloth shoes - the warehouses had tons of them stocked up to be used. How wonderful to take waste material and return it to the people, processed and transformed into the best materials made! Now I come to think of it, I believe we Americans are the biggest wasters of things in the world. I just wish more

foreigners, especially Americans, could come to China and see for themselves. Seeing is believing.

I examined about thirty types of high-grade paper, among them teletype and telegraph paper; there were many others for which I had no time. The raw materials for all were rotten shoes, shoe ropes, rotten fishnets.

FOOD SALVAGED FROM CHAFF

Glazed paper was another new item, made of wheat stalks. Every day tons of them were brought to the factory from the communes - so much that the big gates were clogged, and new warehouses were being built speedily to store them. The stalks pass through a blower in the sieving process, and hundreds of bushels of wheat are collected from the debris and sold to the workers for five fen a catty - that is, two cents for more than a pound.

The repair shop is really a small machine factory. I saw nine new machines like (only larger) than the one already made and turning out toilet paper. All the old machines have been completely modernized. The expensive brass nettings through which paper pulp used to pass, and which had to be changed every few weeks, has been replaced by nylon, longer lasting and much cheaper. I saw other new machines which I did not understand.

UNITED EFFORT AND SELF-RELIANCE

New products, new machines, products surpassing international standards - all this needs technique. After every shift each day the workers get together, technicians, cadres and office workers. The day's work is discussed - its merits, its faults, new ways to increase production, uphold safety, lessen accidents, etc. I attended these meetings and saw and heard the united effort that is forging the factory ahead. Everyone is free to discuss and suggest. Suggestions to improve production, for new inventions, even blue prints for new machinery are brought to these meetings. Even the cooks are resolving their problems by invention; in the kitchen is a machine of their invention which cuts the dough to the right size and shape to be placed on the steamer, saving hours of work. It is everybody together who does these things, and their watchword is "self-reliance".

They depend on themselves, these people, and the country depends on them. My thoughts wandered in one meeting - back

to the factory I had worked in in The States. There, new inventions are grabbed and kept secret to cut the throats of competitors - dog eat dog, big fish eat little fish. Here, where the workers are the owners, factories have contact with other factories; this factory where I worked shares its improvements with others, and sends its workers thousands of miles to study and bring back knowledge from other paper factories. Mutual study and mutual help, mutual exchange of inventions and ideas - no wonder China is progressing so quickly.

## HOSTILE INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ONLY PRODS SELF-RELIANCE

Surely, the American government doesn't want to help all this progress, yet with its long blockade of China it gave the first prod to the self-reliance movement, and kept the people behind the movement till it gained its own momentum.

The United States wasn't the only country whose policy brought out the self-reliance of the Chinese people. I was in China while it went through the three years of natural calamities, 1959, 1960, and 1961; livelihood suffered, factories could not get their raw materials, and even food for their workers from the country-side. China really had difficulties, but every one rallied to the Party, the cadres setting the example. China had been relying on the Soviet Government for assistance in the completion of its production plans; in this period of natural calamity China was like a man fallen down a well. The Soviets heard the cries, and came - to throw stones down the well. It takes the cake that they withdrew their experts, destroyed blueprints, refused to send the machinery that they had already agreed on, then dropped a boulder down the well by demanding immediate payment on a long-term loan. I don't know much about revisionism, but in the school of life I saw China hit and the working people struck from behind. Seeing is believing.

China really suffered, but the people stood firm, like a rock. I heard them say, "We have faith in our Party and Chairman Mao". I believe if it had happened in any country that didn't have faith in its leadership it would have fallen apart. Seeing their spirit I thought at that time they would recover from this stab in the back in seven to ten years, but I was wrong. The change for the better started in six months, and in about two years things were back to normal. I'll always love the Chinese people for this. They had learned the hard way: that the only reliance is self-reliance.

NO "TOO OLD AT FORTY" IN CHINA

Back at the factory I saw how thinking of others takes the monotony out of work, and saves men from being "too old at forty". For example, in one department, which is semi-mechanized, a lot of pulp comes pouring out and must immediately be shovelled into the vat; one or two men could manage this as a back-breaking job, but at the given moment all the workers of the department converge and work together, finishing the job in ten minutes. In The States I didn't give a damn about the others; here, thinking about the other person was something I didn't have to go to college to learn.

Why are the workers so happy and full of energy? In China they are the most respected people in the country, and this is shown in production. When a worker needs material for the next day he writes out a slip and hands it to the man in charge; the guy from the warehouse personally delivers it where it is needed by the workers the next day. On pay day the office workers deliver the envelopes, containing cash, to each worker on his job - no running after your own pay or gate-crashing the bank to get it cashed.

WORKING CONDITIONS

There are four doctors and two nurses on duty in each shift. One doctor is always in the clinic; the other three and the nurses are in the departments with the workers for immediate treatment in case of accident or illness. Those off duty, and on their own time, visit the families in the factory housing. I feel good about this, because my wife lives there, and if she was to get sick a doctor or nurse would be there in a jiffy. (See introduction...ed)

The mid-shift meal is brought right to the departments where we are working, good hot food and a variety of dishes. Once a week the cooks and the workers hold a meeting, the latter telling how the food pleases them or doesn't, and making suggestions. In this way the cooks know just what the workers want to eat.

As long as I've known the factory work clothes, gloves, etc. are issued free. It was August when I worked there on my visit and cold drinks were served us twice a day at our machines.

Absolutely free medical treatment, no matter how expensive, lifts a weight from a worker's mind. I remember how this worried me in The States any time I didn't feel good. Workers'

families not employed are treated at half price, but it won't be long before this is free.

Very few women work at night in our factory, and there are many who are in charge of departments. As I have said, one is president of the factory. All the cadres, managers and office workers take their place as ordinary workers at regular times, just as every worker takes part in administration through suggestions, ideas and criticisms in the meetings. It is natural in this set-up that the presidents and most of those in great responsibility have come up from the workers in the factory. The workers' criticisms and suggestions can be directed at the one responsible, from the president down. This is real freedom.

Old quarters are coming down as fast as the families can be placed in modern apartments. New tall buildings take their place, among them technical and cultural schools for the workers. In other places I have seen the same thing is happening. China looks like one big construction site. New roads are being built, hospitals, sanitariums, rest homes, schools, factories, theaters and movie houses, etc. Tsinan has grown tremendously in the two years I was away.

## THE NEW TSINAN

To me Tsinan looked like a race between industry and the communes - a race to see which could supply the other the fastest. Food stuffs are brought to the city in such abundance that even the large new stores can't handle them, and temporary stalls have been put up everywhere at the sides of the streets and in the corners. I bought tomatoes for the equivalent of one cent for two catties, and with each purchase you were given two more catties free. Milk, eggs and meat are constantly going down in price; I found that one yuan would cover the marketing that used to cost me five. It's really good that when more goods are produced it never means "over-production" - just that you can buy them cheaper. I really noticed this in Tsinan with the food, and with the raw materials for the factory too.

## THE UPSURGE IN CHINA

China today reminds me of a huge steam engine on a train that is puffing away, and is just at the point of full speed ahead. The Chinese say it will take thirty to fifty years for China to become a prosperous nation; I just don't believe it - with the speed of construction getting faster every day.

I believe this big upsurge in China, material and spiritual, mainly comes from Chairman Mao's ideology. Every one studies it. My Chinese wife and her 70-year-old mother study with a group of women, and they both study on their own as well. Our factory workers meet twice a week to study it, and discuss how to apply it in their work; something that strikes home is printed in big letters and pasted on the workshop walls. All the workers I visit study at home too. I think they gather strength from reading Mao's writings and take it into the things they do. I believe it has brought such unity to all the people that it is the main factor in this huge upsurge in China. I have been in China nearly twelve years, a worker among Chinese workers for nine of them, and I always saw what prestige Chairman Mao and the Communist Party had among them, but I never saw it as high as it is today. The Communist Party really and truly represents the people's interest; if it did not it could not hold the position it does in their lives and hearts. It has led them well through the darkest years to light, which is a slap in the face for those who spread the slander that the people's communes collapsed, the Big Leap Forward failed, and the General Line is useless.

## A FORTUNATE POW

How happy and fortunate I was to come to China! My capture in Korea was really a liberation, for I was a deceived person in the past, ready to be cannon-fodder for the big wheels. Now I am treated like a human being. I have a future ahead of me, and know where this future lies. I feel I've found heaven: to me it's China. I want to live to be a hundred years - after that I'll reconsider. I believe I've found God - God to me is the People. I believe the sun radiates warmth, but there's more warmth to me in Chairman Mao's ideology and the leadership of the Party.

I am very fortunate, the Chinese people are fortunate, but I stop right there. I want all the oppressed people in the world to be as fortunate. I've never forgotten the American people, and I've a 101% faith that they will reach this goal for their Negroes, Mexicans, Indians, Puerto Ricans, and poor whites. I hate to think of it; what if I was captured by the German or Japanese fascists, or the Americans in South Vietnam! But I'm in China, and I know first hand of the long-standing friendship between us and the Chinese people. The American government may try to destroy it; but it is like a tall sturdy pine tree: the friendship between the American people and the Chinese people will forever stay green.

159

# *Far East Reporter Publications*

| | |
|---|---|
| THE PAST IN CHINA'S PRESENT by Joseph Needham | 60¢ |
| IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TODAY; Poems by Rewi Alley | 25¢ |
| THE IMPACT OF US CURRENT POLICY ON PHILIPPINE "INDEPENDENCE" | 50¢ |
| SOME OBSERVATIONS ON EDUCATION, TRADE & POLITICAL PROCESS IN CHINA. Dr. Oldham J. Russell Love Anna Louise Strong | 40¢ |
| SOME BACKGROUND ON US IN VIETNAM & LAOS | 35¢ |
| SOME BACKGROUND ON US IN SE ASIA: MAPHILINDO | 25¢ |
| LETTERS FROM FRIENDS IN CHINA | 30¢ |
| ACUPUNCTURE: The Scientific Evidence Han Su-Yin | 25¢ |
| SOME FACTS ABOUT TODAY'S TIBET - Stuart & Roma Gelder | 30¢ |
| MALAYSIA: Arena of International Conflict - Abdul Rahim Karim | 30¢ |
| CHINA SPEAKS FOR HERSELF: Interviews with P M Chou En-lai | 25¢ |
| ASIANS SPEAK OUT ON US "AID" POLICY AND PROGRAMS Pakistan: US Aid to Pakistan: An Evaluation by Hamza Alavi Cambodia: Why Cambodia Rejected Aid by Han Suyin | 30¢ |
| CHINA IN TODAY'S WORLD: "Economic Failure"?! "Opposing Peaceful Coexistence"?! "Isolated"?! "Threat To Asian Neighbors"?! By Maud Russell | 60¢ |
| ORIENTAL RENAISSANCE IN EDUCATION AND MEDICINE Dr. Wilder Penfield (Reprint from "SCIENCE") | 25¢ |
| WHITHER INDIA - Maud Russell | 35¢ |
| CHINA 1963: Food Medicine People's Communes - Rewi Alley, Dr. Wilder Penfield, David Crook, Anna Louise Strong | 50¢ |
| THE WAR IN VIETNAM - Hugh Deane A 32 page Monthly Review Pamphlet | 50¢ |
| ARTS & SCIENCES IN CHINA - 40 page reproduction of British-China Friendship Ass'n 1st quarterly issue | 60¢ |
| CHINA-INDIA CONFLICT | 60¢ |
| THE "NEW ERA" IN THE PHILIPPINES | 25¢ |
| NEW LIGHT ON THE KOREAN WAR | 15¢ |
| REPORT FROM UN: THE CHINA DEBATE by Susan Warren | 25¢ |
| CHINA FACTS FOR AMERICAN READERS - Correcting Popular Tales Israel Epstein & Rewi Alley & Felix Greene | 25¢ |
| AS CHINA SEES UNITED STATES POLICY - Chapter 26 of "Awakened China" by Felix Greene | 50¢ |
| THE WORLD BELONGS TO ALL--FAMILY LIFE IN CHINA Liao Hung-Ying and Derek Bryan | 25¢ |
| "WHAT ABOUT CHRISTIANS IN CHINA?--THE YWCA" A Canadian YWCA Member visits YWCAs in China, with photographs | 25¢ |
| CHINA'S PATH TO HER NEW SOCIETY | 25¢ |
| MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN CHINA - Compiled by Maud Russell | 26¢ |
| PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI--FELIX GREENE INTERVIEW Full Text, October, 1960 | 25¢ |
| "WHY DO CHINESE 'REFUGEES' 'ESCAPE' TO HONGKONG?" Maud Russell and Anna Louise Strong | 15¢ |
| CHINA AND INDIA? AND INDONESIA? AND BURMA? - Maud Russell | 50¢ |
| NEW PEOPLE IN NEW CHINA, Maud Russell | 35¢ |
| THE REAL TIBET - Susan Warren | 25¢ |
| A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE'S COMMUNES - Elsie Fairfax Cholmley | 5¢ |

## FAR EAST REPORTER

Annual Subscription $2. 00

Making available significant facts and analyses contributed by competent writers on the Far East

MAUD RUSSELL, Publisher P.O. Box 1536, New York, N.Y. 10017